AL-HIDAYAAH
1420 NO. 12 1999

WHO MAY PERFORM 'ITIKAF

1. It is neccessary for 'Itikaf that a person be a Muslim and sane. Hence, the 'Itikaf of an insane person or a kafir will not be valid. However, just as a minor child may perform salat or keep fast, similarly such minor may perform 'Itikaf.
2. A woman may also perform 'Itikaf in her home by setting aside a specified place for 'Ibadat and performing therein such 'Itikaf. However, it is necessary for her to obtain her husband's consent for such 'Itikaf. Moreover, it is essential that she is not a state of menstruation and nifas.
3. It is a condition of 'Itikaf Masnun and 'Itikaf Wajib that a person be in a state of fasting. Hence, if a person is not in a state of fasting, he cannot perform these categories of 'Itikaf. However, fasting is not a condition in the case of Nafl 'Itikaf.

PLACE OF 'ITIKAF

For male persons, 'Itikaf can only be performed in the Masjid. The most blessed and preferred 'Itikaf is that performed at al-Masjid al Haram in Makkah. The next most preferred 'Itikaf is that performed at al-Masjid al-Nabawi in al-Madinah. Third in order of preferability is al-Masjid al Aqsa (in Al-Quds). Fourthly, any Jami'Masjid. However, it is not necessary to perform 'Itikaf at a Jami Masjid. Itikaf may be performed at any Masjid where prayers are said five times (each day) in jama'at.
If a Masjid is such that five time prayers (each day) are not said therein, then in such an event there is a difference of opinion amongst the 'ulama'. Some scholars are of the view that 'Itikaf may be performed at such a Masjid, although it is not preferable.
'Itikaf can be made in a Masjid wherein only in Ramadhan five daily salaat are performed.

TYPES OF 'ITIKAF

'Itikaf Masnun - This refers to that 'Itikaf which is only performed in the month of Ramadhan during the last ten days thereof commencing on the twenty-first night and terminating upon the sighting of the moon of Shawwal (that is, on the eve of 'Id al-Fitr). It is termed 'Itikaf Masnun because Rasulullaah (sallallahu alayhi wasallam) performed 'Itikaf every year on these days.

'Itikaf Nafl - This refers to that 'Itikaf which may be performed at any time.
'Itikaf Wajib - This refers to that 'Itikaf
a) which becomes Wajib because of making nadhr, that is, taking a vow, OR
b) which becomes Wajib as Qada' for rendering void a Masnun 'Itikaf.

THE ADAB OF 'ITIKAF

In view of the fact that the purpose of 'Itikaf is to withdraw oneself from worldly affairs and devote oneself entirely to the remembrance of Allaah, therefore, one must during the course of 'Itikaf avoid unnecessary talk and work. Whatever time one finds, one must spend in performing Qada Salaat, nawafil (salaat), tilawat al-Qur'an and other 'Ibadat, Dhikr and Tasbihat. Moreover. the learning and teaching of Ilm of din, lectures and nasihat and study of Islamic books is permissible and also a cause of obtaining thawab.

PERMISSIBLE ACTS (MUBAHAT) IN 'ITIKAF

The following acts are permissible in the state of 'Itikaf
1. Eating and drinking.
2. Necessary transactions of purchase and sale relating to the necessities of life. However, it is not permissible to make the Masjid a centre of trade as such.
3. Sleeping.
4. Haircut - provided the hair does not fall in the Masjid.
5. Talking and conversation, but it is necessary to avoid unnecessary talk.
6. To contract a Nikah or other transactions.
7. To change clothes, apply scent and oil.
8. To assist a sick person in the Masjid, apply bandage or show him a medicine.
9. To give lessons on the Qur'an or Ilm of Din.
10. To wash and sew clothes provided that when washing the person remains within the masjid and the water falls outside the Masjid. This ruling also applies in the case of washing pots or utensils.
11. To pass wind in the Masjid at the time of necessity.

Moreover, all those actions are permissible in 'Itikaf which are not makruh or render the 'Itikaf void, and which are in themselves halaal.

MAKRUHAT OF 'ITIKAF

The following matters are makruh in the state of 'Itikaf:
1. To adopt complete silence because the adoption of complete silence in the Shari'ah does not constitute 'Itikaf. If one adopts silence with the intention that such silence is 'Itikaf, then one will receive the sin of bid'at. However, there is no objection if one does not regard silence as Ibadat and endeavours to remain silent in order to avoid sin. However, whenever the necessity arises, one must not avoid or abstain from talk.

1. To indulge in unnecessary and vain talk; some conversation is permissible in accordance with necessity, but it is obligatory to avoid making the Masjid a place of vanities and unnecessary talk.
2. To bring goods of trade and keep them in the Masjid.
3. To enclose such area of the Masjid for the purpose of 'Itikaf that other persons performing 'Itikaf or Salat are caused difficulty or hardship.
4. To charge a fee for writing, or sewing clothes, or teaching on the part of the person performing 'Itikaf has been considered as Makruh by the Jurists. However, if a person cannot earn to provide for himself for the fasts of the days of 'Itikaf without charging such fee, then it is permissible for him to do so on the analogy of sale. (And Allaah knows best).
5. While performing the sunnat to indulge in a makrooh is not correct.

'ITIKAF OF WOMEN

1. The fadilah of 'Itikaf is not confined to men. Women can also take advantage of it. However, women should not perform 'Itikaf in the Masjid. Their 'Itikaf is only possible in the house. The procedures is as follows:

Women should sit for 'Itikaf in that place in the house which has been set aside for salaat and 'Ibadat. If no such place has been previously set aside, then a place must be so set aside prior to the commencement of the 'Itikaf, and the 'Itikaf must accordingly be performed therein.

2. If no specific places has been built or set aside in the house for salaat, and it is not possible for some reason to so build or set aside a place therein, then in such a case a woman may, at her disrection, demarcate any place within the house and perform 'Itikaf there.

3. It is necessary for a married to obtain the consent of her husband for the purpose of performing 'Itikaf. It is not permissible for a woman to perform 'Itikaf without the permission of her husband.

However, husbands should not without reason deprive their wives of performing 'Itikaf by refusing consent. On the contrary, they should encourage them.

4. If a woman has commenced 'Itikaf with the permission of her husband and thereafter he endeavours to prohibit or prevent her from completing same, then he cannot do so. If he succeeds in preventing her, then the woman is not obliged to complete the 'Itikaf.

5. It is necessary for a woman to be free from menstruation and Nifas

in order to perform 'Itikaf - that is, she cannot perform 'Itikaf in a stage of menstruation and Nifaas.

6. Consequently, a woman should, prior to the commencement of Masnum 'Itikaf, determine whether the date of her menstruation will co-inside with the period of 'Itikaf. If the menstruation is expected to occur towards the end of the last ten days of Ramadhan, then she must not perform Masnun 'Itikaf. However, she may perform Nafl 'Itikaf for the period until the arrival of her menstruation.

7. If a woman has commenced 'Itikaf, and thereafter menstruation commences during the duration of 'Itikaf, then it is wajib upon her to immediately abandon 'Itikaf as soon as her menstruation commences. In such a situation it is wajib upon her to make qada 'Itikaf of only the day in which she abandoned the 'Itikaf (as a result of the intervention of menstruation).

The procedure of such qadah is as follows:

After the woman becomes pure of such menstruation, she keeps fast on any day and performs 'Itikaf. If days remain in Ramadhan, then she may make qadah in Ramadhan in which case that fast of Ramadhan will be sufficient. However, if Ramadhan has terminated at the time of her becoming pure from such menstruation, then she must thereafter specifically keep fast qadah 'Itikaf for one day.

8. The place within the home demarcated by a woman for the purpose of 'Itikaf will for the duration therefore fall within the hukn of the Masjid. It is not permissible for her to move from such place without a Shar'i necessity. She cannot leave such place and enter any portion or area of the home. If she does so, her Itikaf will break.

9. The rules applicable to men relating to moving from the place of 'Itikaf are also applicable to women. For those needs and necessities in relation to which it is permissible for men to leave the Masjid, it is similarly permissible for women to leave the place of 'Itikaf for such needs and necessities (not Janazah).

For those actions in relation to which it is permissible for men to leave the masjid, it is similarly permissible for women to leave the place of 'Itikaf. Accordingly, women should thoroughly acquaint themselves with the rules relating to 'Itikaf Masnun which have been discussed earliest under the heading Itikaf Masnun".

10. During the 'Itikaf, women may, whilst siting in their place of 'Itikaf, indulge in sewing and knitting. They can advise and guide others in regard to matters affecting the home. However, they cannot leave the place demarcated for 'Itikaf. Moreover, it is preferable if they utilise their time in Dhikr, Tasbihat, Tilawat al-Qur'an and 'Ibadat. They should not spend too much time on other matters.

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